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CIA | OCT | WH2WH 740806

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SOURCE REF:

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3		6		9		12	

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ITEM NO: WH-3 DATE: 6 AUGUST 1974

SUBJECT: PANAMA--MODERATE POSITION LIKELY ON CANAL DEFENSE ISSUE

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THE TORRIJOS GOVERNMENT WILL PROBABLY FORMULATE ITS POSITION ON PROTECTION OF THE CANAL ONLY AFTER HEARING THE US PROPOSAL FROM AMBASSADOR BUNKER WHEN HE RETURNS TO PANAMA TO RESUME THE TREATY NEGOTIATIONS ON AUGUST 8.

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THE PANAMANIANS ARE AWARE THAT RETAINING FINAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR PROTECTION OF THE CANAL IS ONE OF WASHINGTON'S BASIC AIMS. THEY ARE MAINLY INTERESTED IN GAINING HIGHLY VISIBLE EVIDENCE OF A PANAMANIAN ROLE IN CANAL DEFENSE, POSSIBLY ONE THAT WOULD INCREASE GRADUALLY DURING THE LIFE OF THE TREATY. IN DECIDING ON HOW MUCH OF THE PRESENT US MILITARY PRESENCE THEY PANAMANIANS WILL PROPOSE TO LET REMAIN, THEY ARE LIKELY TO MAKE A VERY SHARP DISTINCTION BETWEEN THE FORCES DIRECTLY RELATED TO CANAL PROTECTION AND THOSE WHOSE PRIMARY OBJECTIVE IS TRAINING OR OTHER FUNCTIONS.

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